

4-17-08

Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team

Members Present:

Ryan Lance, Dr. Bill Williams, Terry Pollard, Jim Cagney, Terry Cleveland, Scott Werbelow, Levi Martin, Albert Sommers, Dr. Walt Cook, Cathy Purves, Dr. Jim Logan, John Etchepare, Rob Hendery, Dr. Ken Mills, Rep. Monte Olsen, Sen. John Hines, Joel Bousman, Dr. Frank Galey, Bob Wharff

Update on Herd Plans and Program Review:

Wyoming's Brucellosis Free status remains intact. The state had a reactor in Sheridan, but it did not prove to be a positive case. There are no verified cases of Brucellosis in cattle since regaining status.

Program review has been requested, but it was not made a part of the USDA budget moving forward.

There are currently 51 plans in the existing area of concern under Ch. 2 Brucellosis Rules. In all, there are 112 herd plans – most were developed when the area of concern was more expansive. Progress has been fairly limited, but WLSB has been trying to disseminate information, meet with sale barns (relative to dealer and trader licensure) and develop plans. Dr. Logan highlighted the need for funding. Terry Cleveland suggested a letter from the Team to USDA to fund the Brucellosis Program. Ken Mills suggested that the funding issue extend to lab testing shortfalls as well.

Letter on vaccine research dollars. In an era of declining federal budgets, there is less federal funding assistance, but seemingly more requirements. The ultimate need for federal dollars – specifically for vaccine research – was underscored. Cleveland suggested mentioning the substantial funding from the state. Cook related that the change in the timing for receiving funding from USDA complicates the issue as well. Hendery suggested that we include G&F dollars in the letter as well. Logan mentioned that the reduction in the grant will affect WGFD more than the Livestock Board. Monte Olsen indicated that almost \$14 million has been spent since 2004 – general fund dollars primarily. Cleveland mentioned that the license fee dollars – in addition to general fund dollars – expended by the state thus far are significant. The letter should reference funding starting in FY04 expenditures and go forward from there.

Testing at Sale Barns – Testing Generally:

The Legislature increased funding for testing and increased flexibility for the amounts that can be reimbursed to veterinarians and sale barns. Numbers have been collected and validate the notion that the reimbursement amounts need to be made more flexible (see pie chart). With the data – Cook will likely recommend a sliding scale for reimbursement based on the number of animals tested.

The discussion then focused on testing at sale barns and the thought that the cattle that are tested at sale barns should only be those from the area of concern. Albert Sommers suggested that this narrowing could put the cattle from that area on an island and could expose us to some positive animals being undetected from ID or MT. Ken Mills asked if the narrowing of testing would affect our status relative to the APHIS program. Cook mentioned that - off-the-record - APHIS was supportive of narrowing the area. If we narrow the area – we could reduce the cost by over half. Joel Bousman suggested that the Livestock Board increase its focus on economic incentives to get more samples from the risk area. Olsen mentioned that there are constitutional limitations on direct funding to producers. There is a group that is working to discuss options – including working with the Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Account Board – which could be a source of help for the producers. Senator Hines mentioned that he visited with LSO attorneys and suggested that a comparison of the state’s economic development programs might lead to the conclusion that agricultural incentives might be appropriate.

Bousman suggested that we explore expanding funding within the NRCS program – not creating an entirely different approach. Sommers suggested that the incentive program go forward simultaneously with any proposal to narrow the testing requirements.

Ryan Lance provided an update to the Team about the USDA rulemaking and the GYIBC MOU. The Governor has repeated his requests to USDA to meet regarding the rulemaking (related to changing the Brucellosis rules to encompass wildlife), but has heard nothing. Logan also suggested that he has tried to set up the meeting, to no avail. The Governor remains adamant that he will not sign the GYIBC MOU and its call for eradication, until he knows what the USDA rule calls for in terms of how the eradication will be accomplished.

Terry Cleveland and Brandon Scurlock provided an update on BMAPs and the Jackson and Absaroka Bison BMAPs. Final BMAPs are available on the WGFD website. The presentation will also be made available.

Bernie Holz updated the Team on the bison hunt following completion of the Elk/Bison EIS and issuance of the ROD. The harvest was 266 bison. If a similar harvest can be maintained, WY can be within objective within 5 years. Once at objective – between 70 and 90 bison will be harvested. All harvested animals were tested.

Elk Surveillance in Park County:

Traditionally, there has been 2-3% seroprevalence in elk that do not use feed grounds. Recently, WGFD has seen an increase in the seroprevalence in non-feedground elk herds. Elk are apparently migrating between the Park and adjacent areas to the East. Because not much is understood about this situation, WGFD will intensify its surveillance efforts in the northwest corner of the state – Cody Region, specifically. There was extended discussion that centered on the need to continue surveillance statewide – in addition to the expanded effort in Park County. Terry Pollard suggested that the outfitters and guides be engaged to help enhance surveillance. Rob Hendry mentioned that ranchers that allow hunting might help. Walt Cook suggested that if the data holds and continues to run counter to the conventional wisdom with feedgrounds – management with the

cattle herds will have to shift – in a manner that will have to be innovative. WLSB might have to amend testing requirements and, in the absence of the management tool of the feedgrounds, prevention will have to come from livestock side with much education being necessary.

Update on 2008 Test and Removal Project:

Brandon Scurlock gave an update on the Test and Removal Project at the Muddy Creek and Fall Creek feedgrounds. Terry Pollard and Albert Sommers suggested feeding earlier and adjusting decisions relative to the feeding schedule, etc. based on the changed circumstances year to year. Joel Bousman praised the WGFD for its efforts, especially in the face of very difficult circumstances.

Update on Research Projects:

Dr. Mills provided an update on research projects related to Brucellosis, particularly tied to advancements in testing regimes, new vaccines and other efforts. The need for new BSL-3 lab facilities was highlighted, together with a strong emphasis from Albert Sommers on the need for vaccine research. Brandon Scurlock offered his work on various research projects that are highlighted on the WGFD website.

Eric Petersen outlined the collaboration efforts to do a communications survey, develop pamphlets and discuss funding for dissemination of the information pamphlets. The Team voted unanimously to defray the cost of publishing the brochure with BCT Funds.

The Team also voted to give the Education Team its endorsement to proceed with the communications survey.

Rep. Olsen and Sen. Hines then provided an update on the 2008 Legislative Session. All of the funding for Brucellosis was contained in the Budget, meaning it was not added on the floor, so not much discussion surrounded its approval.

The Legislature also took up legislation dealing with veterinarian loan repayment, increasing the reimbursement level for veterinarians, supplying funding for the WGFD, changing the reportable disease reporting requirements and allowing testing reimbursement for sale barns.

Galey asked about the prospects for the construction of a BSL-3 lab which has been moved up in terms of State Building Commission priorities.

Public Comment was then opened up, with no comments being offered.

The meeting concluded with discussion about the Feedground EIS, with the Team suggesting that Galey craft a Team comment on the EIS. Galey agreed to craft a general statement and run it by the Team, with the need for rapid turnaround given the approaching deadline.